

# Forsaker or Partaker

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The caption of this article refers to the brief but lucid story of Demas recorded in II Timothy 4:10.

The brevity of the story is such that we can relate it unabbreviated on this page. It reads like this: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.”

The clarity of this story is seen not so much in the facts as such but rather in its repetitious character. Writes T. G. New, “Poor Demas was not the last of his tribe. We today seem to have far more *forsakers* than we do *partakers*”. Not uncommon is it to find the story rewritten in various forms upon the annals of the church throughout history. Legion is the Demases who “having loved the present world have turned renegade.”

Are you, young people, *forsaking* or *partaking*?

Before we attempt to answer this question we should try to see more clearly just what Demas did when he turned *forsaker*. The story does not say that he left the church but Paul writes that “he hath forsaken me”. He forsook Paul who was a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and an ambassador of the Gospel of salvation. For this reason we may not oversimplify the matter by simply classifying all church-deserters as Demases and further then conclude that all those who remain in the church today are Lukes and Tituses. The mere fact that we remain in the church does not leave us unexposed to and unstained by the sin of Demas.

Demas forsook Paul and in doing so he forsook Christ. Calvin explains, “It was truly base in such a man to prefer the love of this world to Christ. And yet we must not suppose that he altogether denied Christ, or gave himself up either to ungodliness or to the allurements of the world, but he merely preferred his private convenience, or his safety to the life of Paul. He could not have assisted Paul without many troubles and vexations, attended by imminent risk of his life, he was exposed to many reproaches, and must have submitted to many insults, and been constrained to leave off the care of his own affairs. And, therefore, being overcome by his dislike of the cross, he resolved to consult his own interests. Nor can it be doubted, that he enjoyed a propitious gale from the world. That he was one of the leading men may be conjectured on this ground, that Paul mentions him amidst a very few (at Col. 4:14) and likewise in the Epistle to Philemon (vs. 24) where also he is ranked among Paul’s assistants, and, therefore, we need not wonder if he censure him so sharply on this occasion, for having cared more about himself than about Christ.”

The story of Demas is a lucid example of *Truth vs. Error!*

The story contains a might challenge as well as a stern warning to Protestant Reformed Youth! You, among whom Christ dwells in all the glory of the revelation of His truth, are daily exposed to the temptation and danger of turning *forsaker* instead of *partaker*. Demas did! Will you?

Firstly, the temptation is real because to remain with me (Paul, the apostle; Christ, the Truth) means that you cannot escape the cross. The reproach of Christ is upon you. You shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. Men shall persecute you, revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely. In the world ye shall have tribulation. Remember the word that I (Christ speaking in John 15:20) said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

We cannot *partake* of Christ without all this and if we cannot partake of all this, we shall be *forsakers*, not *partakers*. The way is not easy.

Secondly, Demas turned forsaker because he *loved the present world*. This world with all its opportunities, pleasures, riches and more (many more in the present world than in the world of Demas' time) is a constant allurement to the flesh. But let us not be mistaken in this. To forsake Christ and the truth does not mean that one is immediately manifest as renegade to the cause of the Truth and wholly given over to the pursuit of the lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Demas, in forsaking Paul, undoubtedly did not immediately identify himself with the godless and immoral world. He did not forsake *religion* but his evil was that he put the things of the world and his flesh first and who does this has no part in the Kingdom of Christ. The story does not tell us in so many words but it is not unlikely that Demas continued to go to church, perhaps on occasion continued to preach (?) and was held in esteem by others in the church who were of the same mind as he, but nevertheless he was *forsaker* and not *partaker*.

God is not mocked!

One cannot be partaker *and* forsaker!

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.

Not self, not individualistic interests, not money and pleasure and all that pleases my flesh but Christ, His Church, His Word, the running of the race, the fighting of the battle, the striving toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the faithful and diligent use of every opportunity to grow in the knowledge of the truth – these things are *first!*

Forsakers *desert* them.

Partakers *pursue* them.

*Which are you!*

Should we not attempt to apply the thought of our article to the particular circumstances of young people for whom these lines are primarily written, our article would become too long. Suffice it to write that each of us will have to do this for himself. Nor is this difficult. Let us pause to reflect upon the question: “where are my interests? What captivates my first love?” Do we have so many interests in the world of pleasure, business, sports, etc. that we sun our duty to study the Word of God or perhaps even neglect our place and calling in the societies of the church giving as an excuse that we are too busy?

Love not this world nor the things of this world but set your affections on things above!

T. New said: “We are living in an age when the world is condoned rather than being condemned. Let us not be a Demas, but be like unto Paul, not *forsaking Christ*, but always *forging ahead with Christ*. Those who *quit* Christ here will never *sit* with Him there.”

And again he said: “*Those who truly know the facts will never think of going back*”.

We add to this that the reason for it lies in the unchangeable truth: “Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13). Those who are not planted by God never truly *know* the facts. And, “*My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*” (John 10:27, 28). These *know* the facts for “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven.”

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